

TO: Dan Carlsson - LGBCE
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Sent by email

Warwick District Council Boundary Commission Review – REVISED Labour submission

Labour, along with other parties, supported the original submission by the Administration to reduce the number of District Councillors from 46 to 43 and to make the new Wards coterminous with the new County divisions.

We were surprised at the recent decision by the Conservative majority on the Council to recommend instead an increase in numbers. All other parties voted against this proposal.

The Labour Group supports the original proposal for a modest reduction in Councillor numbers to the original 43 or, following recent detailed analysis, perhaps to 44 – a cut of 6.5% or 4%.

A. The main reasons which in our view justify a reduction in numbers has been described in detail in the paper to the Council on 20 September 2017¹. We summarise here:

1. Drop in WDC Councillor representation on outside bodies since 2011 of 50%
2. Drop in WDC Councillor representation on working parties and forums etc since 2011 of 38%
3. Drop in Councillor attendance required at and prior to Community Forums of 50%.
4. Council staff numbers have already fallen by 15% over the same period, and this has increased to 23% after the Leisure Centre staff transferred earlier this year.
5. If the number of Councillors on Committees were to drop from 11 to 9 as tentatively suggested in the Officer paper this would be another drop of 18%.
6. Demands on Members of the quasi-judicial committees have fallen considerably by ensuring that appropriate delegations to Officers are in place and by adopting the Panel approach to hearings and decision-making for Licensing matters.

B. Labour understand the methodology for predicting the projected housing growth is accepted by the LGBCE but would like to make some points about the assumptions based on those figures:

7. Representation should principally be based on the current Electoral Roll (which is likely to plateau or fall from now to 2019 after the 2017 surge).

¹ estates4.warwickdc.gov.uk/cmis/Document.ashx

8. WDC ratio of electors to Councillors is not out of line with similar Councils – four identified in the report have higher ratios, in two cases, Canterbury and Colchester, over 10% higher.
9. Much of the projected increase in housing will take place after the next election in 2019.
10. Projections rely on actual and expected planning permissions; but housing approvals often do not get built to planned Council timescales. Construction is frequently deferred for financial and operational reasons.

C. Finally there are further considerations which in our view add weight to the argument for a modest reduction to 44:

11. A significant proportion of Councillor time, is taken up with general Council business, whether Council itself, Committees, sub-Committees and working parties. Probably between 50 and 70% of most Councillors' workload – more for some, less for those 19 members with zero or only one Committee commitment. This workload is not directly correlated with electorate size. On this analysis, even a 10% increase in casework due to a 10% growth in the electorate, will only add between 3 and 5% to a Councillor's workload.
12. A recent report conducted by an Independent Remuneration Panel into Members allowances set out that Councillors spend 12 hours per week as the time required from a 'backbench' Member to fulfil all their duties. This equates to 78 days per year on an 8 hour working day. This is lower than the LGA census from 2013 which suggested average of 14 hours per week. We do not believe the role will significantly increase for Councillors for example we are predicting a circa 12% increase in electorate. If you increased the hours councillors worked by the same amount that would see you working the 2014 average for councillors based on the LGA survey. (see paras 26 to 38 of the footnote)²
13. Councillors can be reasonably expected to be operating at higher levels of efficiency, in common with all other public servants, in these difficult times. Major improvements and investments in the 'tools of our trade' compared with a few years ago, in mobile technology, website and email services in particular, have greatly enhanced our ability to communicate and coordinate with Officers, residents and each other. The efficiency benefits should continue to grow. Ratios of Councillors to voters should reflect this.
14. Our proposal should seek 'best fit' ratios of electors to Councillors in each Ward (while adhering to co-terminosity) i.e. the fewest possible exceeding a 10% tolerance and particularly the fewest positive variations, especially if those Wards will see more new building in the future. Variations to the average of over 10% across the proposed 14 multi-member Wards are as follows :

² <https://estates4.warwickdc.gov.uk/cmis/Document.ashx>

Councillor nos.	2017	o/w positive	2023	o/w positive (%'s)
42	4	2	5	2 (35,15)
43	4	3	3	1 (17)
44	5	3	4	1 (11)
46	7	5	7	4 (16,13,14,11)
48	7	4	4	3 (19,18,12)

The 42 Councillor model, though a reasonable fit to the 2017 electorate, would greatly under-represent one Ward, Budbrooke, by 2023.

The best fit on this important democratic criterion seems to be 44 Councillors. 46 and 48 seem out of the question, with half of Wards outside tolerance today and seven and four still outside in six years' time. With the 48 Councillor model, in 2013, 3 Wards would have a significant positive ratio of 19%, 18% and 12%.

In the Appendix below, we would like to draw your attention to the distance from electoral equality in the two models:

- if 44 cllrs % distance from electoral equality
- if 48 cllrs % distance from electoral equality

A negative meaning there needs to be more electors and a positive figure means there are too many electors. As the LG BCE look to have all wards within 10% (+ or -) of 0. The wards which are in the negative (eg Milverton) does allow for further development. Those which are in the positive (eg Cubbington, Leek Wootton & Willes) would far exceed the 10% tolerance with the suggested 48 Councillors model. With the 44 model is a lot closer to the electoral equality with only Warwick West being slightly over (at 11).

An estimate of 44 Councillors is overall a closer percentage of electoral equality.

D. Conclusion

The Labour Group recommends that the number of Councillors be set at 44 on grounds of efficiency, workload, economy and democratic accountability.

Colin Quinney
Group Leader
on behalf of the Warwick District Labour Group

Appendix

	46 cllrs now 1/9/17 Electorate	if 43 cllrs % distance from electoral equality now	Estimate d 2023 electorate	42 (Cllrs per ward)	if 42 cllrs % distance from electoral equality	43 (Cllrs per ward)	if 43 cllrs % distanc e from electora l equality	44 (Cllrs per ward)	if 44 cllrs % distance from electoral equality	48 (Cllrs per ward)	if 48 cllrs % distanc e from elector al equalit y
Budbrooke & Bishops Tachbrook	7999	-22	11891	3	35	4	3	4	6	5	-8
Cubbington & Leek Wootton	7559	-1	9185	3	4	3	6	3	9	3	19
Kenilworth Park Hill	7980	4	9154	3	4	3	6	3	9	4	-11
Kenilworth St. John's	7825	2	8160	3	-8	3	-5	3	-3	3	6
Lapworth & West Kenilworth	6986	-9	7961	3	-10	3	-8	3	-6	3	3
Leamington Brunswick	8741	14	9293	3	5	3	8	3	10	4	-10
Leamington Clarendon	7865	3	8100	3	-8	3	-6	3	-4	3	5
Leamington Milverton	7063	-8	7188	3	-19	3	-17	3	-15	3	-7
Leamington North	8653	13	8653	3	-2	3	0	3	3	3	12
Leamington Willes	8037	5	9083	3	3	3	5	3	8	3	18
Warwick North	6978	-9	7515	3	-15	3	-13	3	-11	3	-3
Warwick South	7552	-1	10120	3	15	3	17	4	-10	4	-2
Warwick West	9252	21	9383	3	6	3	9	3	11	4	-9
Whitnash	7365	-4	7948	3	-10	3	-8	3	-6	3	3
Total	109855³		123633	42		43		44		48	
Average Ratio electors per Cllr	2388	2555			2944		2875		2810		2576

³ Includes additional 700 on electoral roll in Lapworth & Kenilworth estimated by Officers to allow for anomaly of zero Warwick students registered as at 1/09/17